

Novel·Ties



A Study Guide

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LEARNING LINKS

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For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide consists of lessons to use in conjunction with a specific novel. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

In a homogeneous classroom, whole class instruction with one title is appropriate. In a heterogeneous classroom, reading groups should be formed: each group works on a different novel on its reading level. Depending upon the length of time devoted to reading in the classroom, each novel, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in three to six weeks.

Begin using NOVEL-TIES for reading development by distributing the novel and a folder to each child. Distribute duplicated pages of the study guide for students to place in their folders. After examining the cover and glancing through the book, students can participate in several pre-reading activities. Vocabulary questions should be considered prior to reading a chapter; all other work should be done after the chapter has been read. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. The classroom teacher should determine the amount of work to be assigned, always keeping in mind that readers must be nurtured and that the ultimate goal is encouraging students' love of reading.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits, formed by practice in focusing on interpretive comprehension and literary techniques, will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Slave Trade

In the 1500s Spain and Portugal established sugar plantations in Cuba, the West Indies, and Brazil. To supply these plantations with laborers, the Europeans first enslaved native people and then began to import slaves from West Africa. The African slave trade increased in the 1600s as France, England, and the Netherlands founded colonies in the Caribbean. The black slaves who were imported to work there were often captives of war who had been traded by other Africans for rum, cloth, or weapons.

Traders in the profitable slave market frequently used one of several “triangle trade routes” across the Atlantic. Ships from Europe would sail to West Africa, trade goods for slaves, and then take the slaves to the West Indies or the English colonies to be sold. Money from the sale of the slaves was used to buy sugar, coffee, and tobacco which was taken back to Europe. Ships from New England followed a similar route, carrying goods to Africa to be exchanged for slaves and selling the slaves in the Americas. Profits were used to buy sugar and molasses which was brought back to New England and sold to rum manufacturers.

During the 1600s and 1700s, African slaves in North America worked mostly on indigo, rice, and tobacco plantations. When the cotton gin was invented in 1793, the demand for slaves became even greater. Slaves were put to work on cotton plantations throughout the South as well as on sugar plantations in Louisiana. There were about four million slaves living in the United States by the year 1860.

About the Author

Born in New York City in 1923, Paula Fox attended Columbia University, and held positions as a teacher at the Ethical Culture School in New York and as a professor of English literature at the University of Pennsylvania.

Fox’s father was a writer, but she did not live with her parents. She spent the first six years of her life under the care of a Congregational minister who lived in a house overlooking the Hudson River. The minister, who had once been a newspaperman, conveyed his love of history and writing to Fox. When she left his care, she went to California and then to a Cuban sugar plantation to live with her grandmother. Eventually she returned to New York, but continued to move from place to place during her childhood.

After holding a variety of jobs, including covering war-torn Poland for a small British news agency, Fox married and attended Columbia University. She then went on to teach, and shortly thereafter began her prolific and highly-respected writing career. Fox’s first children’s book, *Maurice’s Room*, was published in 1966. Her writings include books for children as well as adults, and she has won numerous awards, including the National Institute of Arts and Letters Award and the Hans Christian Andersen Medal for Writing. *The Slave Dancer* was cited as one of *School Library Journal’s* Best Books of the year in 1973 and was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1974. The book was also cited in the Special Hans Christian Andersen Honor List for 1979.

GLOSSARY OF SEAFARING WORDS

| | |
|------------|--|
| aft | in, toward, or near the rear of a ship |
| berth | sleeping place on a ship |
| boatswain | ship's officer in charge of rigging and other equipment |
| boom | long pole used to hold and stretch out the bottom of a sail |
| bowsprit | large pole coming out from the bow of a ship |
| brail | rope used to haul a sail up or in |
| bulwark | side of a ship above the level of the upper deck |
| cargo | goods carried by a ship |
| cathead | piece of wood or iron near the bow of a ship to which the anchor is secured |
| clipper | fast sailing ship of the 1800s with slender lines, overhanging bow, and tall masts |
| coaming | raised frame around a hatchway used to keep out water |
| davits | cranes on the side of a ship used for moving things such as lifeboats |
| deck | floor extending from one side of a ship to another |
| doldrums | region of the ocean near the equator where there is often little or no wind |
| fid | pointed wooden pin used to open strands of a rope |
| gaff | pole used to hold the upper edge of a sail |
| galley | part of a ship where cooking and food preparation is done |
| halyard | rope used for raising and lowering things on a ship |
| hatchway | opening in part of a ship through which a person may pass |
| helm | wheel or lever used to steer a ship |
| helmsman | person who steers a ship |
| hull | body or frame of a ship |
| knot | measurement of speed; one knot equals one nautical mile (6,076.1 feet per hr.) |
| mast | long pole rising from the deck of a ship which supports sails and rigging |
| masthead | top of a mast |
| mizzenmast | mast aft of the main mast |
| pressed | forced into service aboard a ship |
| privateer | privately-owned armed ship |
| ratlines | small ropes attached to the shrouds of a ship to form a rope ladder |
| rigging | ropes, cables, and equipment used to work sails and support masts on a ship |
| shrouds | ropes which lead from a masthead to the sides of a ship to support the mast |
| skiff | light rowboat that sometimes has a sail |
| spyglass | small telescope |
| tarpaulin | waterproofed piece of canvas |
| yards | crosswise poles on a mast that support sails |
| yawed | turned or moved off course |